

## REMARKS

The Official Action of May 21, 2003 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

New claims 71-74 have been added more completely to cover the subject matter which Applicants regard as their invention. Support for the recitations in these claims appears in the specification at, for example, page 3, lines 20-35 (describing the washing step as facilitating the formation of a film); page 69, last paragraph, and Fig. 1 (describing the sequence of steps, including a drying step) and page 75, lines 19-28 and Fig. 1 (describing temperature and pressure).

The indicated allowability of claims 22-24 and 33-35, if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim, has been noted with appreciation. The other claims have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Miyabayashi in view of Turnbull et al or in view of this combination of references further in view of Nagai et al or Miyabayashi EP 0900831. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

The claimed invention is based in part upon Applicants' discovery that a step of washing after deposition of the recited reaction solution and ink composition helps to fix the printed ink on the recited recording medium. The Miyabayashi reference describes a process wherein an ink and a reaction solution produce agglomerates and would lead one of skill in the art to believe that the agglomerates must then be dried and fixed onto the recording medium described therein. The claimed process includes

an improvement of this prior art process. The Applicants have surprisingly found that, before drying, the agglomerates in the claimed process will be fixed on the recording medium by the step of washing with a polar solvent before it is well dried.

The Turnbull reference does not show or suggest the claimed washing step. Turnbull does disclose an optional sealing step that may comprise the step of immersion of a printed aluminum sheet in boiling water. However, as next discussed, this does not show or suggest the claimed washing step.

According to the Turnbull reference, before printing, anodizing of an aluminum sheet is conducted. It is well known that the surface of aluminum has a layer of aluminum oxide and it protects the inner aluminum. Since the layer is very thin, aluminum is subject to the anodizing process to make the oxide layer thicker. This technique is well known in the art pertinent to aluminum. This process on the other hand creates very small pores in the surface of the aluminum so that the surface becomes rough. In order to seal the pores, the sealing process of anodic oxide coating is popularly employed. One of the popular sealing processes is to subject the surface of the aluminum with steam or boiling water with hydration of the aluminum. The Turnbull reference merely refers to this sealing process at column 4, lines 45-47. In this process, pressure is also applied to the surface with the steam or boiling water. It appears that the high temperature of water is needed for the hydration. It also appears that this is not a step for washing the printed image on the aluminum sheet.

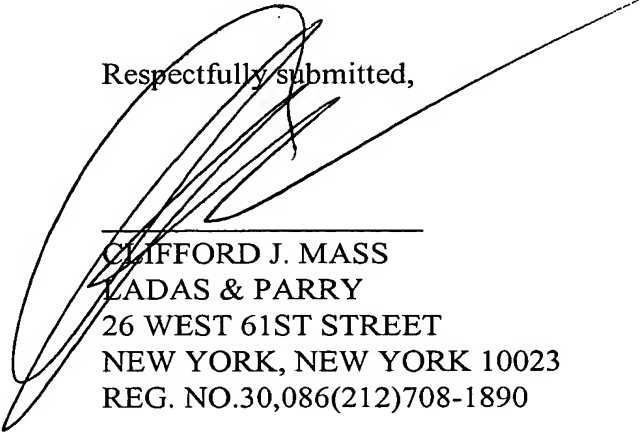
In the process according to the claimed invention, the washing step with a polar solvent such as water does not need a high temperature. This washing step is not a process for treatment of the surface of the recording medium, even when it is an

aluminum sheet. In the process of the claimed invention, it is not necessary to make water hot or boiling. On the contrary, high temperature water might make a recording medium deform. This would be disadvantageous.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that, even assuming for the sake of argument that the cited references were properly combinable, the combination would not arrive at the claimed invention with the recited washing step. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the cited references do not set forth even a *prima facie* case of obviousness for the invention as claimed.

In view of the above, all rejections and objections of record are believed to have been successfully traversed and the application is believed to be in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Respectfully submitted,



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